

Brilliant Beef on the Cheap: The 10 Best Dallas Burgers Under 10 Bucks

BY NICK RALLO

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The under-\$10 burger is a dying breed in Dallas. Every week, a new sandwich emerges from the wild shouldering farm beef and craft whatnot that's poised to topple the lists of cheap, simple burgers. The drop-dead-simple dive burger and the diner burger, the ones that you used to be able to pay for with a few bucks from your paper route, seem to be going the way of the iPod.

Great burgers come in all forms. Some of the best burgers on planet are the ones that get a hard crust on a flat-top that's predates JFK; it works because they're made with experience and, above all, a little love for the beautiful condiment of grease.

These are the 10 burgers in Dallas that top of the list of the best for less than a house loan.



This custom-built burger at Dugg features fried green tomatoes.

Nick Rallo

The Build-Your-Own at Dugg Burger (\$7.95)

Dugg Burger is the fast-casual spot that makes a tiny home for your ingredients by scooping out a bit from the bun. You pick your toppings, which are simple and good — jalapeños and bacon and caramelized onions — the bun is toasted and ingredients nestle in the bun hole like baby birds in a nest. It's simple, and it works. Try a beef burger with pepper Jack and onions and you'll marvel at lightning-speed execution. You could compare it loosely to Liberty Burger, but Dugg's just bested Liberty's classic on a recent visit.



Behold the griddled crust of a simple, classic cheeseburger with American cheese.

Nick Rallo

The Stock Cheese at Off-Site Kitchen (\$4.95)

There is nothing like a precisely executed, under-\$5 burger. Off-Site Kitchen's stock cheese is an icon of good griddle sear. It has a heavy crust from the piping-hot griddle on an Angus chuck roll and shoulder patty, and a slight crown of micro-shredded lettuce and a slice of American cheese. It tastes like what it must feel to hit a home run with a wooden bat out of Rangers stadium. In other words, it tastes like a perfect summer.

The Roadside Sliders at Easy Slider (1 for \$5, 2 for \$9)

Easy Slider is laid-back but focused. It makes mini burgers look easy. (Hint: They're not.) The Roadside is cheddar, bacon, a sweet and thick barbecue sauce — typically overwhelming, but not here — with grilled jalapeños and crispy onion strings. A cornichon comes skewered through the center because Texas is a great place to live. The best part: The patties, though slider-sized, come cooked exactly medium rare and seasoned with just salt and pepper. It's delicious.



The Roadside has cheddar, bacon, barbecue sauce, grilled jalapeños and crispy onion strings. *Easy Slider*



The double onion ring burger at Digg's Tacos is underrated.

Nick Rallo

The Burguesa at Digg's Taco (\$6.50)

When you place an order for Digg's Burguesa, a just-under-seven-buck cheeseburger (with 80 percent chuck, 20 percent fat patty) that's topped with two how-do-they-do-that crunchy onion rings, it gets called out to the cooks at the griddle. Digg's uses a flat iron to gently press the patty into the hot griddle, which urges that crusty sear. Cheese, Jack or cheddar, melts under a dome, and they hand-batter the onion rings. One bite in, and this burger will crawl into the addiction center of your mind and form a home.

The Cheeseburger at Maple & Motor (\$8.07 with tax)

They're masters of the flat-top at M&M. A half-pound chuck and brisket-blend patty is iron-pressed into the griddle, allowing some juices to run out and fry a hot crust onto each side. Couple it with golden tater tots, also fried in magic oil. The sound of the sizzle of the flat grill when you put in your order will cause a primordial happiness. It arrives, as some of the best burgers in do, in a basket with mustard — no mayonnaise — lettuce, red onion and dill pickle, and it's one of the best deals for the quality in the city.



Maple & Motor makes a fine \$8 burger. *Observer file photo*



Dairy-Ette burgers are nowhere near photogenic, but that's not the point.

Nick Rallo

The Cheeseburger at Dairy-Ette (\$4)

Dairy-Ette's \$4 burgers have never cared about being photographed. The bun often arrives smashed and murky with delicious, delicious meat grease. American cheese is partly melted, always right. This is a burger that reaches deep into memories and swirls them around. It will make you think of the best backyard burgers — with a crisp medley of chopped white onions and pickles — and hot Texas summers.

The Happy Hour Burger at Top Knot (\$5)

Every morning, Top Knot makes fresh Parker House-style buns. The result is a buttery cloud with a delicately thin shell. This surprising little double cheeseburger, just bigger than a slider, comes with two Angus beef patties (spiked with ground pork), cheddar, bacon, pickles and miso-infused mustard. The bacon lends a crunchy texture and the beef is salty, fatty and tender.



The double cheeseburger is served daily from 5 to 6:30 p.m at Top Knot. *Top Knot*



The drop-dead simple cheeseburger at Keller's Drive-In. *Nick Rallo*

The Cheeseburger at Keller's Drive-In (\$2.65)

It's not a list of the best cheap burgers in Dallas without the icon that you could probably call the grandfather of the modern Dallas dive burger. Keller's stupendously iconic speckled poppyseed bun surrounds a burger with softened white onion below thin patties. It's necessary that you devour it, deftly holding the greasy wax paper and plucking any wrapper cheese, right in the driver's seat of your car. At \$2.65 after tax, it's cheaper than just about anything you can get in Dallas these days.

The Rose Burger at Mr. Mesero (\$8.95)

Two slices of American cheese, sometimes un-melted, park between two well seasoned patties. It comes with crunchy iceberg lettuce, topping the beef in neat stacks. It's a designer joint with a homey burger. There's sliced-thin tomato and pickle. No fuss surrounds the burger; it's free of elevated aiolis, making it one of Dallas' best burger deals.



Mr. Mesero's version has two patties and two slices of cheese (\$8.95).

Nick Rallo



Potato matchsticks top the burger at Oak Cliff's food stand. *Nick Rallo*

The Chorizo-Burger at C Señor (\$7.58)

Oak Cliff's ¡C. Señor! has one of Dallas' most interesting and delicious burgers under 10 bucks. Also, and this is huge, you can order it as a taco. On a recent visit, three melted slices of pepper Jack top my heavily seared, chorizo-blended beef patty. Adobo ketchup is caramelized right on the patty, adding a nudge of tangy, cuminy sweetness. It's rich with chorizo's magical oil and big on beef flavor. Why don't more restaurants offer a taco version of everything?